



## The Adventures of Ibn Opcit

Poetry by

John Barr

*The Adventures of Ibn Opcit* is a two-volume work by John Barr, first president of The Poetry Foundation. *Grace*, the first volume of this mock epic, is the master song of Ibn Opcit, a Caribbean gardener/poet condemned to die by torture. In a series of jailhouse monologues we hear him descant on justice, on creation, on America, on death and on life after death. In volume two, *Opcit at Large*, the poet pushes back on his oppressors in three adventures. Like Virgil in the *Inferno* he visits the afterworld of reincarnation in “The Afterdammit;” he struggles to survive as poet laureate to Africa’s newest President for Life in “Opcit en Afrique;” he orbits earth as “The Last Cosmonaut” on the eve of the fall of the Soviet Union. He comes home with the dignity and strength of one who has survived and prevailed.

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*The Adventures of Ibn Opcit*  
Two-volume box set  
ISBN: 978-1-59709-273-9  
6 x 9; Hardcover  
280 pages  
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Release: January 15, 2013

*Grace*, Volume One  
of *The Adventures of Ibn Opcit*  
ISBN: 978-1-59709-265-4  
6 x 9; Tradepaper  
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*Opcit at Large*, Volume Two  
of *The Adventures of Ibn Opcit*  
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6 x 9; Tradepaper  
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### Biographical note:

The poems of **John Barr** have appeared in many magazines and have been published in seven previous collections: *The War Zone* (1989), *Natural Wonders* (1991), *The Dial Painters* (1994), *Centennial Suite* (1997), all by Warwick Press; *The Hundred Fathom Curve* (1997) and *Grace* (1999), by Story Line Press; and *The Hundred Fathom Curve: New & Collected Poems* (2011) by Red Hen Press. Barr has served on the boards of the Poetry Society of America, Yaddo, and Bennington College, the latter as chairman. He has taught in the graduate writing program of Sarah Lawrence College, and was appointed in 2004 the first president of The Poetry Foundation, publisher of *Poetry* magazine. He lives in Chicago and New York. *The Adventures of Ibn Opcit* is his eighth collection.

### Praise for *Grace*, Volume One of *The Adventures of Ibn Opcit*:

“The six parts of [*Grace*] add up to a linguistic tour de force, verbal playfulness reminiscent of the work of James Joyce or Anthony Burgess. *Grace* is a unique reading experience, guaranteed to add spice to the ‘glum tostada’ of American poetry.”

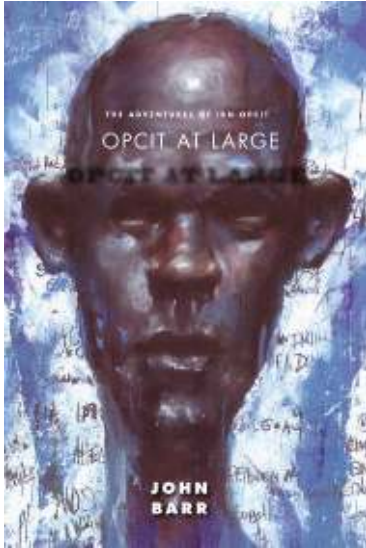
—*Library Journal*

“John Barr’s *Grace* is a wonderful surprise. It’s that rarest, rarest, rarest of phenomena, an enjoyable book of contemporary poetry. He’s on to something marvelous. The potential of his new approach is limitless.”

—Tom Wolfe



**More Praise for *Grace*, Volume One of *The Adventures of Ibn Opcit*:**



“I have relished reading *Grace* and rereading it many times. I think it is an extraordinary piece of writing, so daring and yet so joyfully positive. At times uproariously funny, and then, suddenly, so beautifully sad, a wondrous attempt to humanize the language that for me translates into sheer reading pleasure. I keep it on my small private bookshelf, it has given me a reading pleasure that doesn’t come often from new poetry these days.”

—Alastair Reid, *The New Yorker*

“In *Grace*, not only does John Barr handle the demanding form of the long poem with skill and panache, but he delivers a one-of-a-kind linguistic tour de force. Spoken mostly in a Caribbean dialect and rollicking with word play, *Grace* achieves a riotous level of verbal inventiveness. I don’t know any other work with which to compare it unless we think of it as a kind of funky *Finnegans Wake* in verse with palm trees. You have never read anything quite like this wildly sustained imaginative drama. Set those one-page lyrics aside and dive into this momentous feat.”

—Billy Collins

**Excerpt from *Grace*, Volume One of *The Adventures of Ibn Opcit*:**

Of the Americas they set the South to the east of the North.  
And east of everywhere, an oceanic bank  
make of a Cambrian reef a chowder of life:  
plenty of bivalve with the duodenal mouth;  
brain coral and such, dat imitate geometry;  
wrasse and angelfish, rays and morays.  
Careful of upheaval, dis edge of earth  
shove above de oceanic verge.  
Pretty soon—couple of million years—  
it green up (something always come to make a meal):  
conifer attempts, a forest of approaches  
to *tannenbaum*. And den Walt Whitman's live oak,  
cognomen of chlorophyll, make a stand.  
Butterflies, more colorful close to the equator,  
dine on mud, fruit, animal sweat.  
De spider move his needles in de greatness of his kind.  
Lord of its bush, a tanager  
lay down the law in colors and call.  
In all but name we have de state of *Grace*.

